

National Gallery of Art School Tours

Lead Docent Guidelines

Updated August 2016

1. INFORMATION TO DISCUSS WITH THE TEACHER

Introductions

Introduce yourself and welcome the teacher. Indicate that you are pleased that the students will be visiting the Gallery.

Cannot Reach the Teacher

If you cannot reach the teacher by phone or email, after trying a few times, contact Jennifer to see if there is other contact information.

Contacts

Make sure that the teacher you are communicating with is the one who will be bringing the group to the Gallery. Exchange cell phone numbers so that you may be in contact on the day of the tour, if necessary.

Logistics

Confirm which tour and which building you will be meeting in. **There might be added confusion because of the reopening of the EB. In the EB you will meet your students in the Atrium and in the WB you will meet your students in the Rotunda. Buses can drop off at the 4th Street entrance and at the Mall Entrance.**

Number of Students and Age of Group

- Confirm number of students. (If number changes by more than 10, contact Jennifer immediately.)
- Confirm the age and grade(s) of students.
- For home school groups, please email the **homeschool attendance document** for names and ages of homeschool participants and ask the coordinator to send it back to you within a week.
- Confirm number of groups for tour and **ask the teacher to divide students into groups before they arrive. Please repeat this in all communications.**
- Confirm the number of chaperones – one per group is required but more than one is allowed.

Transportation

Metro stops closest to the Gallery: RED – Judiciary Square; GREEN/YELLOW – Archives/Navy Memorial.

If coming by car, students should be dropped off at the Mall entrance or EB entrance in order to begin tour on time.

Time

Confirm the prompt starting and concluding times of the tour and mention the importance of arriving promptly, as docents might have tours following this one. Suggest allowing extra time for bad traffic, etc. Confirm length of tour and discuss any time or other constraints.

Classes should plan on arriving 15 minutes before their tour start time to go through security, put coats away and begin promptly

Winter Months

Ask the teacher about the school's policy during inclement weather. Make arrangements to call the teacher the morning of your tour if school closings or late openings are announced or expected. Docents may email Heidi Hinish h-hinish@nga.gov after 7:00 a.m. for questions about inclement weather that day.)

Class Preparation

- Be familiar with the Tour Objects and Objectives before you call the teacher.
- Ask if the teacher has brought a group to the Gallery before.
- Explain the tour methodology is inquiry-based rather than lecture-based. You should emphasize that tours are designed to be student centered, in-depth, with fewer stops.
- Give the teacher the web link for the orientation PowerPoint and *Look!* video.
- Discuss with the teacher their expectations for the tour - How does the teacher see this tour connecting to their curriculum? What have the students learned so far about the tour topic? Ask the teacher if there is any **other relevant information** they can provide to assist you in planning the tour.
- If the teacher requests a different tour topic, docent must contact Jennifer immediately as any changes may impact other tours going on at the same time.

Important Points to Communicate to the Teachers

- Do any students have any special needs: language (ESL), cognitive, emotional, or physical? Will anyone be using a wheelchair? If so give teacher the location of wheelchair accessible entrances: WB Constitution Avenue and EB 4th Street for EB tours. Explain that it would be really helpful to know of special needs, so that we could try, to the best of our ability, to accommodate them.
- Ask teachers to provide name tags for students. This helps the docents develop a rapport with students from the beginning. Students are more responsive if called by name.
- Suggest color coding and or numbering of groups to facilitate assigning of groups to docents.
- Encourage teachers to leave lunches and coats on the bus when possible or arrive early to store these items in the black hampers on rollers at the Coat Check Room. Teachers should discourage students from bringing backpacks as they must be checked at the Coat Check Room. Please note that visitors will be asked to present all bags and parcels for inspection. All backpacks, luggage, oversized bags, parcels, and umbrellas must be left in the checkrooms. These items will be subject to x-ray screening prior to acceptance. The Gallery is unable to accommodate any items larger than 17 x 26 inches (43 x 66 cm) into the Gallery or its checkrooms.
- Ask if students will arrive after visiting another museum. If students are coming from out-of-town, discuss their itinerary.
- If teachers express a desire to visit more than five stops (this is usually more than five objects) explain our philosophy of *less is more*, that spending the time to observe more carefully is much more rewarding than a “whistle-stop” tour. If there are additional objects the teacher would like to see, suggest that they take some time after the tour has ended to self-guide her students. You should be able to provide them with information about object availability and make sure the space is not already being utilized at that time.
- During the tour, the use of cell phones and PDAs (this includes taking photos, taking notes, sending text messages, or making phone calls) by students, teachers, and chaperones is discouraged. Docents should ask that cell phones be placed on vibrate or silent for the duration of the tour.
- Strongly encourage contact teacher to share all the above information (i.e. logistics, rules, etc) with other teachers involved with the tour.

2. DESIGNING THE TOUR

As Lead Docent, you are in charge of the tour. You have the unique opportunity to design a tour that will be a positive experience for students.

Make plans for the tour as soon as you receive the schedule in the mail. Attempt to contact the teacher as soon as you receive your tour confirmation to discuss the items listed above (1. Information to Discuss with the Teacher). If the home phone number is listed, it means the teacher is happy to have you call. Many teachers prefer email contact. Consider developing your own template for emailing teachers or use the template provided by staff.

Review

- Review overlapping tours and object lists with other Lead Docents, as they may want to use your preferred objects. Negotiate!
- Take a fresh look at the Tour Object and Objectives List
- Visit the Gallery or Gallery website to review object locations and availability
- Be mindful of objects with priority on other tours

Plan Tour Route

Consider the theme and objectives of the tour. Ask yourself what enduring ideas you would like your tour to promote. Think about the needs and expectations of your particular audience.

Select appropriate objects and whole galleries based upon your theme and objectives, as well as information gained from the teacher about the curriculum. Remember to consider age-appropriateness.

Include variety on your tours. Include works with different mediums and different subject matter. Try to take advantage of under-utilized spaces and galleries to avoid congestion.

One-hour tours and seventy five-minute tours consist of four or five stops.

Make the routes as physically efficient as possible. Tour rotations do not have to be conducted in a particular direction (e.g. clockwise)

Avoid (as much as possible) assigning back to back galleries/rooms. Consider spacing between docents on tours. Consider parallel routes to avoid traffic jams. If you need assistance with planning your tour routes, contact education staff for help.

Lead Docents may suggest various age-appropriate strategies, activities, or themes for the tour in general or for specific tour stops.

Draft Tour Route

- Plan a “draft” tour route(s) just after receiving the schedule, even if you have not reached the teacher, so you can immediately contact the other Lead Docents to negotiate overlapping tour objects.
- Email your rotations to adult docents giving tours during the same timeslot to ensure that school tour and adult tour routes do not overlap.
- Check gallery talks included on the weekly schedule to avoid overlapping with Gallery lecturers. Please contact the staff lecturers via email for detailed information regarding gallery talk tour routes. Please note that gallery talks led by Gallery lecturers do have precedence over school tours.
- Spanish Art school tours have precedence with Spanish objects. Avoid these rooms, if Spanish Art tours are scheduled.

This “draft” tour plan should be sent to the other docents on your tour as soon as possible (even if it has to be tweaked later) so they can begin to study and prepare their tours. Docents have busy schedules and benefit from early tour route notification.

Be prepared to revise tour routes following your conversation with the teacher and/or fellow Lead Docents. Make sure you communicate all changes in rotation, immediately by e-mail, to other lead docents and adult docents. All information you gather about the class that you will be working with should be fully communicated to fellow docents as well.

Call Jennifer ...

- if number of students increases or decreases by 10

- if teacher cancels your tour.

Send Tour Routes

- **Prior to or no later than 8 days before a tour**, you are required to email all final tour routes to all school docents on your tour and to all adult docents providing tours during the same time slot. Include everybody's routes.

3. DAY OF TOUR

All docents are expected to arrive at least 30 minutes before tour to walk the tour route(s). Make sure works and routes are available. If any are missing, discuss alternatives with fellow docents, noting overlapping tour routes. If there are unexpected gallery closures, contact Deirdre, Jennifer, Liz, or Heidi immediately for assistance. Sometimes gallery closures are due to staff shortage and we can request they are opened for docent-led groups.

Docents should be ready and waiting near the door 15 minutes prior to the tour. Some groups arrive early.

Prepare School Tour Feedback forms and Chaperone cards and stickers for each docent on your team. Give each docent his/her tour route and, preferably, a list of all routes.

Locate black hampers on rollers for coats (in cold weather) and have other docents assist with stuffing coats in the hampers and placing the hampers in the location determined by the Guard at the Coat Check. Retrieve roller hampers with coats at the end of the tour. If the groups are not collecting their coats at the end of the tour, make arrangements with the coat check guard.

For groups that have not arrived by their start time, please contact the teacher by cell phone or call Jennifer. If you can't reach Jennifer, please call Deirdre, Heidi, or Liz. Our goal is to provide the students with the best possible experience. Usually, when groups arrive late, it is beyond the teacher's control, and we don't want to penalize them for that. Docents are expected to wait at least 30 minutes for late school groups and provide the full tour, barring any conflicts, with afternoon tours. Ideally, docents are available on their selected tour day to provide tours from 10:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

On Arrival ...

Greet teacher and move the group away from major entrances as quickly as possible.

Introduce other docents to the teachers and chaperones. Determine that students are divided in groups.

At the start of the tour please remind students, teachers, and chaperones that the use of cell phones and PDAs (this includes taking photos, taking notes, sending text messages, or making phone calls) by students, teachers, and chaperones is discouraged during the tour. Docents should ask that cell phones be placed on vibrate or silent for the duration of the tour.

Following the tour, check with other docents to inquire how the tour went. Ideally you should ask them for feedback about the rotation you gave them. Notify staff via the Reflection Form of any issues, successes, etc., regarding your tour.

Lead Docent Checklist

Date and time of tour: _____

School and teacher's name: _____

Tour title: _____

➤ **Communication with the teacher**

- ☐ Confirmed tour date, time, and length of tour
- ☐ Confirmed number and ages of students
- ☐ Confirmed number of chaperones
- ☐ Asked teacher to divide students into groups before they arrive
- ☐ Provided meeting location for tour
- ☐ Exchanged cell phone numbers

➤ **Class preparation**

- ☐ Explained tour methodology
- ☐ Provided web links for PowerPoint and/or *Look!* video
- ☐ Asked teacher what their expectations are for the tour and how they see the tour connecting to their curriculum
- ☐ Asked teacher if there are any students with special needs (language, cognitive, emotional, or physical)

➤ **Designing the tour**

- ☐ Reviewed overlapping tours (adult, school, and gallery talks) on day sheet
- ☐ Reviewed tour objects and objectives
- ☐ Considered precedence of objects on tours
- ☐ Viewed the Gallery website to review object locations and availability
- ☐ Emailed **draft** tour rotations to other lead docents and adult docents with overlapping tours
- ☐ Emailed **final** tour rotations to other lead docents and adult docents providing tours during the same time slot
- ☐ Emailed **final** tour rotations to staff lecturers providing gallery talks during the same time slot

Notes: